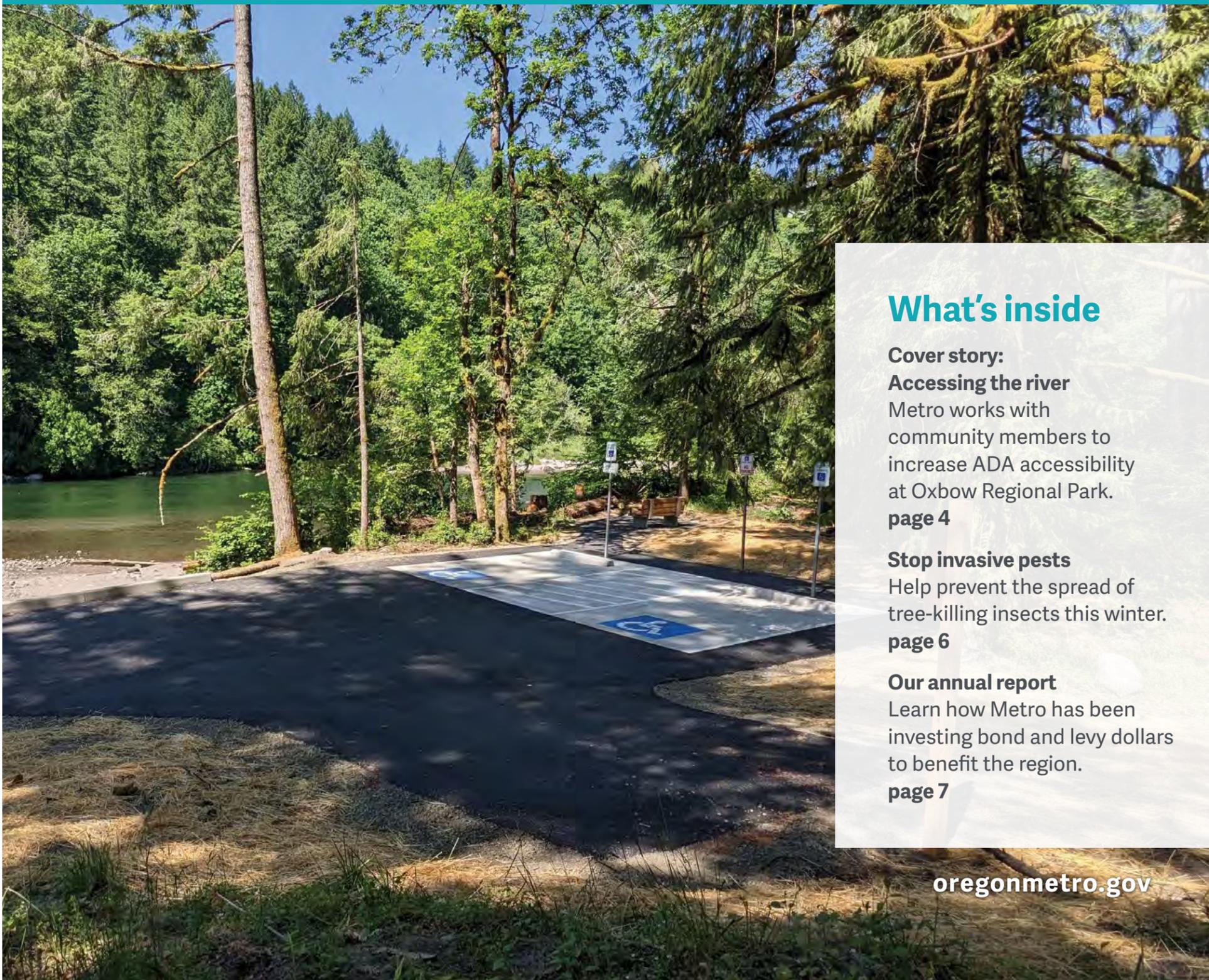


“When somebody has access who did not previously have access, that’s powerful..”



What’s inside

Cover story:
Accessing the river
Metro works with community members to increase ADA accessibility at Oxbow Regional Park.
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Help prevent the spread of tree-killing insects this winter.
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Learn how Metro has been investing bond and levy dollars to benefit the region.
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If you picnic at Blue Lake or take your kids to the Oregon Zoo, enjoy symphonies at the Schnitz or auto shows at the convention center, put out your trash or drive your car – we've already crossed paths.

So, hello. We're Metro – nice to meet you.

In a metropolitan area as big as Portland, we can do a lot of things better together. Join us to help the region prepare for a happy, healthy future.

Metro Council President

Lynn Peterson

Metro Councilors

Ashton Simpson, District 1
Christine Lewis, District 2
Gerritt Rosenthal, District 3
Juan Carlos González, District 4
Mary Nolan, District 5
Duncan Hwang, District 6

Auditor

Brian Evans



If you have a disability and need accommodations, call 503-220-2781, or call Metro's TDD line at 503-797-1804. If you require a sign language interpreter, call at least 48 hours in advance. Activities marked with this symbol are wheelchair accessible: ♿

Bus and MAX information
503-238-RIDE (7433) or trimet.org

Stay in touch with news, stories and things to do.
oregonmetro.gov/parksandnaturenews
facebook.com/oregonmetro
twitter.com/oregonmetro
instagram.com/oregonmetro

Pets policy

To protect plants, wildlife and people, Metro does not allow pets at most regional parks and natural areas. Pets can damage sensitive habitat and threaten wildlife the region has worked to protect. In natural areas where pets are not allowed, people see more wildlife and get closer to it. Seeing-eye dogs or other service animals are allowed. Please bring cleanup materials.



Share your nature and win!



Winner: Ron Brown, West Linn

"While visiting Crystal Springs Garden I noticed this male wood duck play hide and seek between these overhanging bushes. After waiting patiently for some 15-20 minutes he finally felt comfortable enough to show himself alongside of the fall foliage. Such beautiful fall colors."



Finalist: Becky Kuperstein, Portland

"This was taken with a film camera at Pittock Mansion on a beautiful autumn day. I loved the colorful leaves, classic benches and warm light."



Finalist: Anita Spaeth, Portland

"Forest Park Wildwood trail in early November. Our diversity as living beings, our curious and often indefinable entanglement with one another, runs counter to Western narratives of individualism and competition. We are meant to connect, to support, share, and receive. The rhetoric of mushrooms helps me to remember this sentiment."

Submit your photo

Win an annual parking pass, a full-day picnic shelter reservation at Graham Oaks or Scouters Mountain nature parks, a tennis court session, or a round of golf for four people including cart at Glendoveer Golf and Tennis Center.

To enter, submit a photo taken at a park or natural area in greater Portland – your friends and family, a view of wildlife or a sunset, for example. Include a 50-word description of your experience. Where were you? What were you doing? What captured your attention?

The winner will appear in this space. By submitting a photo, you consent to Metro's future use and publication of your photo. Send your photo and description by Feb. 15 to: ourbigbackyard@oregonmetro.gov

Like what you see?

Sign up for the print edition of the quarterly magazine, change your address or save paper by switching to a digital subscription. Email ourbigbackyard@oregonmetro.gov or call 503-797-1545.

On the cover: Metro created new ADA-accessible parking spaces at the boat launch area of Oxbow Regional Park, part of an ongoing commitment to make nature accessible to more people.



Get involved

CLASSES AND EVENTS

SAT. FEB. 17

Smith and Bybee lichens ecoblitz

Join Metro at Smith and Bybee Wetlands as we search for and observe lichen and moss populations around the site. No experience required. Participants can learn about various lichens and mosses, and join an optional lichen survey activity using the iNaturalist app on your mobile device. (You must have the app loaded onto your mobile device to participate in the survey.)

Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Free
All ages
Registration required
Difficulty: easy



SAT. MAR. 2

Plant party at Chehalem Ridge

Join Metro in planting 300 plants! Afterwards there will be relaxing activities such as tea-drinking, nature games and hammocks. Refreshments will be provided. All ages and abilities are welcome.

Chehalem Ridge Nature Park
11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Free
All ages
Registration required
Difficulty: moderate

SAT. MAR. 9

Spring stewardship day at Scouters Mountain

Help care for this scenic park. We will tend the day-use area and park trails. Refreshments will be provided. All ages and abilities are welcome.

Scouters Mountain Nature Park
10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Free
All ages
Registration required
Difficulty: moderate

SAT. MAR. 23

Newell Creek Canyon spring hike and ecoblitz

Join Metro at Newell Creek Canyon Nature park for a spring hike and optional ecoblitz (an intensive survey of plant and animal life). All data collected is used by local scientists for future projects. Learn about local plants and birds while hiking. Refreshments will be provided. All ages and abilities are welcome.

Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Free
All ages
Registration required
Difficulty: moderate

SUN. APR. 7

Mushroom hikes at Smith and Bybee

Discover the fascinating and weird world of mushrooms! Join local mushroom guide Leah Bendlin on this woodland hike at this hidden gem in North Portland. Learn about the ecological roles of fungi, their forms, and how they eat and reproduce. Enjoy hands-on exercises and learn how to identify mushrooms. Field guides will be provided. Morning and afternoon sessions available.

Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area
9:30 to 11:45 a.m. or 12:30 to 2:45 p.m.
\$6/person, fee waiver available
All ages
Registration required
Difficulty: easy



SAT. APR. 13

Mushroom hikes at Oxbow

Discover the fascinating and weird world of mushrooms! Join local mushroom guide Leah Bendlin on this woodland hike at Oxbow Regional Park. Learn about the ecological roles of fungi, their forms, and how they eat and reproduce. Enjoy hands-on exercises and learn how to identify mushrooms. Field guides will be provided. Morning and afternoon sessions available.

Oxbow Regional Park
9:30 to 11:45 a.m. or 12:30 to 2:45 p.m.
\$6/person, fee waiver available; \$5 car/\$7 van or bus
All ages
Registration required
Difficulty: easy

Free Parking Days

Get out and explore nature in 2024! Enjoy free parking at Oxbow and Blue Lake* regional parks, Broughton Beach, M. James Gleason Memorial Boat Ramp and Chinook Landing Marine Park on 18 days in 2024: Jan. 1, 15 and 18; Feb. 15 and 19; March 21; April 18; May 16; June 19 and 20; July 18; Aug. 15; Sept. 19; Oct. 14 and 17; Nov. 11, 21 and 29; Dec. 19.

Parking at all other Metro parks and boat ramps is free year-round.

*Blue Lake Regional Park is closed until spring 2024. Check current park status at oregonmetro.gov/bluelake

Accessing the river



How community members worked with Metro to increase accessibility at Oxbow Regional Park

By Alex Hasenstab

The man and the river

Len Otto has a lifelong bond with the Sandy River. It's where his earliest memories take place. Born in Troutdale, Otto grew up in a home on the Sandy and has fished the river since he could walk. In his adulthood, he was a community activist who participated in work to protect the river. Now, his relationship with the river is almost spiritual.

"The river is coursing through my blood, let's put it that way," Otto said.

As the years turned to decades, 71-year-old Otto eventually became a part of demographic that nearly a third of Americans will join by the time they are 75: those with limited mobility. In fact, according to an analysis on census data by Pew Research Center, around 46% of Americans aged 75 and older reported having some type of disability.

"Pain has become a limiting factor in my life, and while nowhere near as extreme as many, many people, it is an issue," Otto said. "But that is not what led me to start writing letters to Metro about accessibility at Oxbow."

In fact, it was Otto's friends who inspired him. They were fellow anglers with limited mobility, one due to a battle with cancer.

The steep road down to the boat launch area at Oxbow – the only route down from the parking lot – was not ideal or safe for someone in a wheelchair or other mobility device.

It was easier and safer for Otto and his friends to drive themselves to the bottom of the ramp. The problem was, there was nowhere for them to park once they got there. This forced people with limited mobility, like Otto and many of his friends, to be dependent on others to drop them off and pick them up from the end of the ramp.

So in 2020, Otto reached out to Metro looking for a solution. He received a response, but not a clear promise on when changes would be made. Next, Otto wrote a letter to his Metro councilor. He received a response that accessible parking spaces would be made available; it would just take time.

"I was frustrated with the timeline, but I do also understand that sometimes bureaucracy does take time," Otto said.

Metro's accessibility journey

Otto's conversations about accessibility with Metro came shortly after the hiring of accessibility project manager Will Cortez in 2019. Cortez was brought onto the staff with funds from the 2019 voter-approved parks and nature bond.

"In that parks bond, we'd set aside \$11 million just to do ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] accessibility work," Cortez said.

In 2017 Metro hired a contractor to do an ADA barrier assessment of all their parks. Two years later, Metro used the findings of

Above: Len Otto stands in front of the ADA-accessible parking spaces he helped to advocate for at Oxbow Regional Park.

the assessment to create its ADA transition plan, which outlines a strategy for removing physical barriers experienced by people with disabilities. Title II of the ADA requires that Metro's fishing and boating programs be made accessible. In that context, Otto's email came at the perfect time, fitting into work Metro had already begun.

There are many reasons why natural areas and parks were originally created without accessibility in mind, according to Cortez.

"There's this inherent ableism in the way we view people with disabilities, like assuming that they have a lesser quality of life or that they only have the right to a lesser version of life," he said. "We talk so much about the healing qualities of nature. Then again, here we are granting access to only to those folks who have the physical ability to deal with the barriers that are in front of them."

This institutional ableism has led to many parks being built without accessibility in mind. But even as Metro Parks and Nature begins work to change that, there are still challenges. Some locations can't be made accessible without completely altering the landscape. There is also a difficult balance between creating access to a natural area and avoiding impact to the area. Parks providers must find the middle ground between accomplishing goals of access and of environmental sustainability.



"I think as an agency we're at a great place to continue to have these conversations with the community," Cortez said.

When Cortez joined Metro Parks and Nature, he became the point person for the Oxbow accessible parking spaces project.

Metro staff engaged with community members, including Otto, to get insight into the project. They also worked with Adventure Without Limits, a nonprofit that aims to provide access to nature for all. After a few years of planning, permitting, and construction, the parking spaces opened.

Access at last

"There was relief that it finally had happened," Otto said, remembering this Memorial Day, when the spots opened to the public.

After years of planning and construction, the spaces were ready to serve the community. But the day came with strong emotions. One of Otto's friends did not live long enough to see the finished parking spaces. But Otto witnessed others using the spaces and felt a sense of pride in having created something for his community: access to the river he has loved all his life.

"When somebody has access who did not previously have access, that's powerful that they, all of a sudden, can do what somebody else has always done," Otto said.

What's next?

In the last several years, accessibility has been an area of focus for Metro projects. Metro's most recent ADA-compliance work is happening at Graham Oaks Park. Cortez said it's a sort of pilot project for what accessibility work at Metro parks could look like. Projects include repainting accessible parking spots, making repairs to the Tonquin Regional Trail, leveling out the parking lot and connecting the bus stop to the trailhead with an accessible path.



This work should be completed by the beginning of 2024.

Going forward, Metro is not only using bond funding to make accessibility improvements to current parks, but building accessibility into the core of planning and designing new parks. For instance, both of Metro's newest nature parks – Newell Creek Canyon and Chehalem Ridge – include paths that can be used by adaptive mountain bikes made for people with disabilities.

This is exactly what Otto hopes to see in public spaces in the future: accessibility not being an afterthought.

"When a project is at the very, very beginning of its planning, even at the inception of the idea, let's start thinking: 'How can this apply to all groups?'" he said.

From top: In addition to building two new ADA-accessible parking spaces at Oxbow Regional Park's boat launch, Metro installed a bench overlooking the Wild and Scenic Sandy River with a short, paved path to allow visitors a way to enjoy greater access to nature. Before the spots were constructed, visitors with disabilities would either have to traverse the steep road from the main parking lot down to the river, or have someone drive them to the bottom of the road and then drive their vehicle back up to the top of the hill to park in the main lot.

Learn more about how Metro is making its parks and trails more accessible. It goes way beyond pavement.
[Oregonmetro.gov/AccessibleNature](https://oregonmetro.gov/AccessibleNature)

Help save trees – don't move firewood

By Hannah Erickson

You're planning a family trip to the coast, and you've been busy getting all the supplies to bring with you for a cozy weekend of watching the winter waves: food, cocoa and some firewood you found on sale at a local store. You're ready to go!

Unfortunately, so are all the invasive, tree-killing pests lurking in that firewood.

Firewood is a major pathway for invasive species. You might not be able to see them when looking at firewood, but pests and fungi can hide inside logs and sticks. When they arrive at a new location, they can leave the wood and find new territory to infest.

Biologists believe firewood has been a vehicle for new infestations of invasive insects and diseases, including the emerald ash borer and the Mediterranean oak borer. These insects, which are not native to our region, have recently been found in local trees – and they have the potential to decimate the region's Oregon ash and Oregon white oak populations.

History shows that infestations like this can wreak ecological havoc. Invasive pests and diseases have devastated native species of trees such as the American chestnut, eastern hemlock, and the American elm – species which have been part of American forests and streetscapes for centuries.

When you burn firewood that is sourced locally, it still may contain pests and diseases, but they probably already exist in that area so you're not introducing new problems. When firewood is transported long distances, however, it can allow invasive species to travel much farther and faster than they ever could under their own power.

In general, when it comes to buying or harvesting firewood, the rule to follow is: The more local, the better. Try to burn wood within the same county it was harvested in – or, to use the Oregon Department of Forestry's recommendation, within 10 miles of where it was harvested.

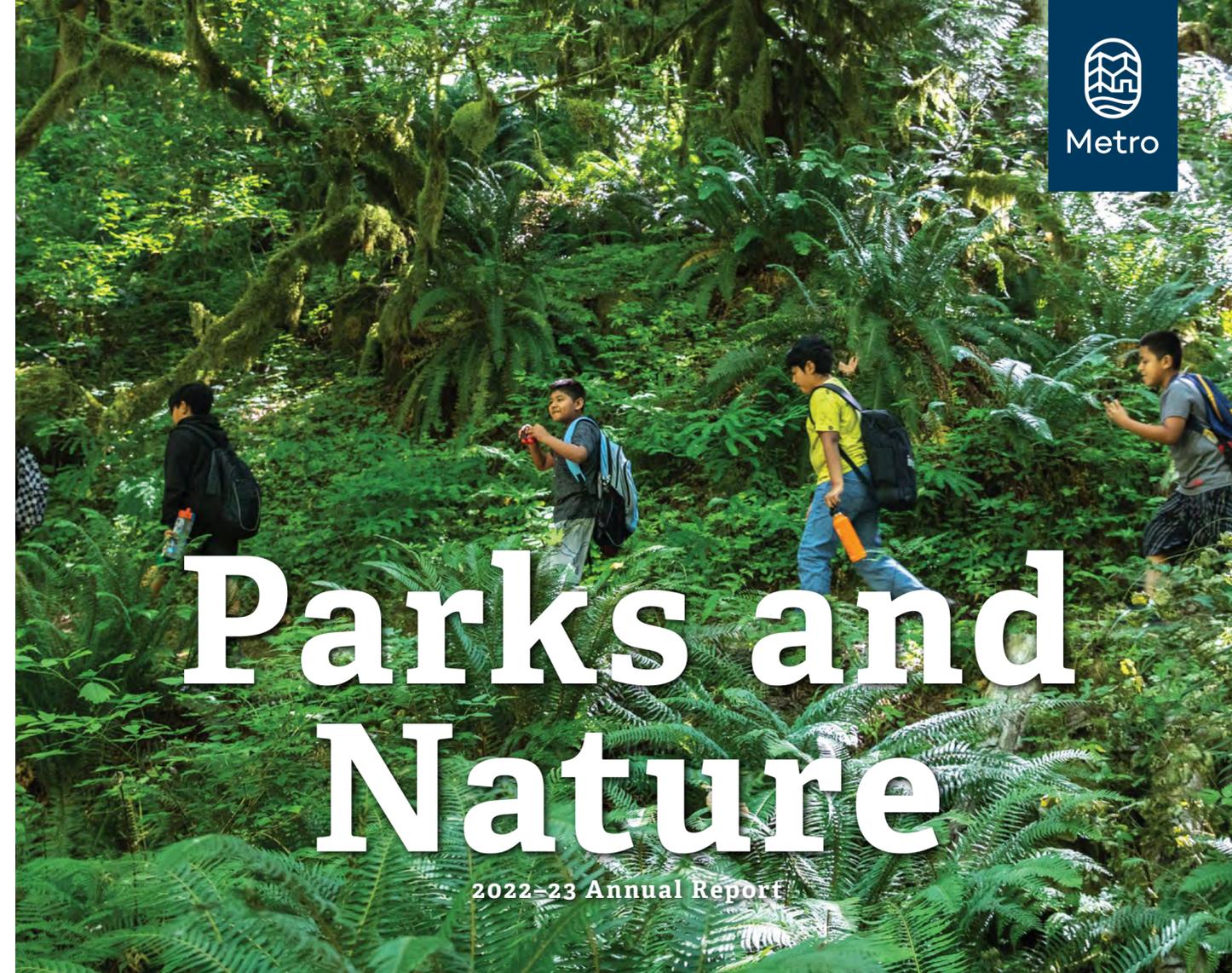
Drying or seasoning firewood does not reliably remove pests and diseases. Commercially kiln-dried firewood is safer to transport than other varieties, but the safest choice is to buy wood where you're planning to use it.

This winter, whether you're cozying up around the fireplace or roasting marshmallows at an outdoor bonfire, make sure you're using local firewood.



From top: Oregon ash trees in the Portland metro area have begun to show signs of destruction by emerald ash borers, which will lead to widespread tree death if the infestation continues to spread. New infestations are difficult to detect, as damage to the tree may not become apparent for up to three years after infestation begins. Emerald ash borers are native to Asia but have been in the U.S. since at least the early 2000s and were first spotted in Washington County in 2022. About half an inch long, they are recognizable by their namesake green color. Mediterranean oak borers are smaller, about the size of a pencil lead. They were first spotted in Oregon in 2018 and the first confirmed case of an Oregon white oak was found in 2023 in Troutdale. While it is unknown how either insect first came to Oregon, biologists warn that firewood can be a vehicle for transporting infestations throughout a region.

Report sightings of these invasive pests to the Oregon Invasive Species Hotline at oregoninvasiveshotline.org



Parks and Nature

2022–23 Annual Report

With strong community support, Metro makes investments in nature that benefit neighborhoods across the region

Voters created Metro's nature program in 1995 when they passed the first greenspaces bond. In the quarter century since, they've passed bonds in 2006 and 2019, providing the region the funds to build a unique regional park system with nature at its heart.

Metro's parks and nature funding measures weave together this regional park system with local parks and conservation efforts by sending funds to local cities, parks districts and community organizations to support projects that matter to their neighborhoods and communities.

Metro now manages more than 18,000 acres of parks, natural areas, trails and historic cemeteries. In 2013, voters approved a five-year local option levy that funds operations at these special places. They renewed the levy in 2016.

In November 2022, voters were asked to renew the levy for a third time. With the region just beginning to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and grappling with the housing and homelessness crises, would voters continue to see the value in investing in nature?

The overwhelming answer was: yes. The levy passed with 72% of the vote, extending funding to 2028.

The 2019 parks and nature bond and the renewed levy work in tandem. The bond is limited to capital investments, like buying natural areas and building parks. The parks and nature levy provides nearly three-quarters of Metro's operating budget.

The levy funds rangers to serve park visitors and maintain facilities, supports scientists and land technicians to restore natural areas, and purchases all the materials needed to manage parks and natural areas, from garbage bags and water fountains to oak saplings and shovels.

At least 40% of the levy will go to habitat restoration and land management. At least 35% of the funds will support regional park operations. Alongside these maintenance and operations funds, at least 15% of levy funds is for the popular Nature in Neighborhoods grants program that support community-led efforts to connect people with nature. The remaining 10% is available to any of the three programs, providing Metro flexibility to meet unexpected needs and opportunities.

Together, the bond and levy, along with funding from Metro's general fund, allow Metro to fulfill its mission to protect water quality, restore fish and wildlife habitat, and connect people to nature close to home.

The work is guided by the Parks and Nature System Plan, a long-term strategic plan and framework, and the Parks and Nature Department's Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. The action plan, completed in late 2018, comprises more than 80 actions aimed at improving economic, environmental and cultural equity. These actions focus on connecting communities of color to resources; providing more equitable access to safe, welcoming parks, trails and natural areas; and helping people of color connect with nature and one another in the region's parks and nature system.

Along with these guideposts, Metro Parks and Nature is continually working to support the wellbeing of the people, plants, animals and habitats of the region.

Keep reading to learn more about how your tax dollars were spent from July 2022 to June 2023.

Small purchases, huge impacts

Over the last 25 years, using funds from three bond measures, Metro bought 14 different properties outside Wilsonville with the aim of preserving one of the few viable biodiversity corridors left in the area.

Metro's most recent acquisition there is very small: just 3.67 acres. The small plot lies to the west of Grahams Ferry Road, overlooking

Coffee Lake Creek and the industrial buildings on the far shore.

This little property is the vital puzzle piece that links up a span of three existing Metro natural areas. Together they form a 350-acre protected landscape that includes two of the most imperiled types of habitat in the Willamette Valley: wetlands and oak upland.



Coffee Lake Creek Wetlands



Excavators remove an old logging road at Ennis Creek Forest Natural Area in Multnomah County.

Protecting nature

Protecting and restoring land remains at the core of Metro's parks and nature mission, and with direction from the 2019 parks and nature bond, that work is being done with greater input from community members. The bond provides up to \$155 million for land for natural areas from willing sellers and for large-scale restoration projects.

A major restoration project this fiscal year removed an old logging road from a natural area near Forest Park. Deconstructing these

roads protects the natural area by reducing erosion and landslides. When the work is done, it's impossible to spy where the road ever was.

This year, Metro added 188 acres to its portfolio of natural areas. Purchases included 25 acres at Clear Creek in Clackamas County, .7 acres on Crystal Springs Creek in Portland, 92 acres near North Holcomb Creek in Clackamas County, 39.5 acres in Fir Clearing Creek Canyon in Washington County.

Habitat restoration

FY 2022-23



103

Habitat and water improvement projects

6,751

Acres with restoration projects underway

Plantings and weed control

FY 2022-23



15

Planting projects

80

Weed treatments



Community members share ideas for the Nature in Neighborhoods community choice grants.

Local investments with regional effects

Metro's community investments support a variety of projects: community stewardship and restoration, nature education, outdoor experiences, land acquisition, capital improvements, park amenities and more. Altogether over the last quarter century years, the public – through Metro – has invested more than \$100 million to support a broad range of community nature projects across the region, helping to preserve land, restore habitat, expand access and more.

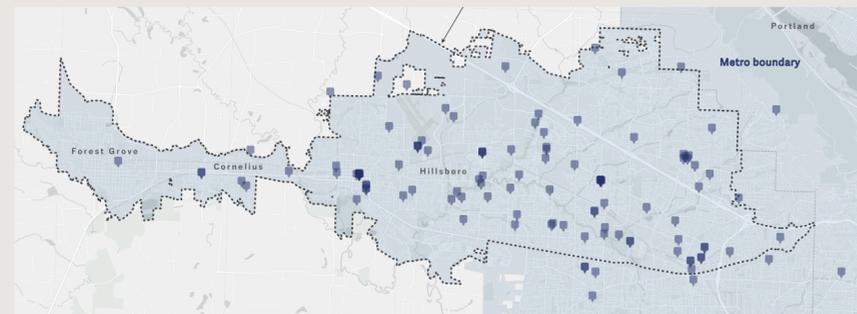
In the fall of 2022, Metro awarded \$20 million for trails projects across the region. This one-time infusion of funds from the 2019 parks and nature bond will support 12 projects, most of which focus on building new sections to existing trails and linking trails across the regional trails system.

The bond also provides \$30 million for the large-scale community visions program. The program provides catalytic investments – essentially a big boost – for projects that increase access to nature for people across greater Portland or improve the resilience of the region's urban natural areas. In May, the Metro Council committed to providing up to \$10 million for three major parks and nature projects: the acquisition

of a large tract of forest by the Trust for Public Land and Oregon State University; development of the waterfront education park that is part of OMSI's neighborhood on the Willamette River; and helping Albina Vision Trust purchase properties in the Albina District.

All three of the natural areas and parks bonds have included a "local share" program that allocates funds directly to local park providers for parks and restoration projects that matter to their communities. Throughout 2020, the 2019 bond measure's \$92 million local share program was remade to include the new bond's focus on racial equity and meaningful community engagement and since then, the region's park providers have been working with their communities to identify priority projects for these funds.

The City of Tualatin used their funds to purchase a natural area, part of which will be developed into a park. Tualatin's investment is across the street from Plambeck Gardens, new apartments funded by Metro's voter-approved affordable housing bond. Tualatin's purchase is a great example of how the 2019 parks and nature bond measure's racial equity and community engagement criteria guide decision making.



The ideas submitted by community members Nature in Neighborhoods community choice grants ranged across Metro Council District 4, which covers the northern part of urban Washington County.

Community-driven grants

This fiscal year saw Metro take its grant-making to a new level with the pilot for the Nature in Neighborhoods community choice grants. This program puts community members in the lead to imagine, design and choose the parks and nature projects they want to see in their communities. The pilot grant cycle began in spring of 2023 and more than 100 ideas were shared by community members.

At the first idea-gathering event, dozens of community members came together on a cloudy Saturday morning at Hillsboro's Shute Park Library to help change the future of their neighborhood's outdoor areas.

People, young and old, recorded stories about how they engage with nature and reflected on outdoor spaces that brought them joy. Others chatted with landscape architects while placing sticky notes and smiley faces (or frowns) on images of pollinator gardens, accessible spaces and other natural areas, indicating their favored types of projects.

At later events, community members took those ideas and helped turn them into buildable projects. Two community votes in fall 2023 decided which projects will be funded.

The winning projects will be awarded by the Metro Council in January 2024.



One of the Three Elders statues created by a team led by Grand Ronde artist Bobby Mercier at Chehalem Ridge Nature Park

Committed to equity

Racial equity is the heartwood of Metro's parks and nature values: every other aspect of work grows from that strong core. In 2016, the Metro Council adopted the Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity. Diversity and Inclusion and the parks and nature department created an action plan to work toward that policy. The 2019 bond measure, which voters passed by an overwhelming margin, strengthened the department's commitment to racial equity by making it a requirement for all of the bond-funded work. Beyond these strong and clear policy directions from the Metro Council and voters, the department holds its own commitment to make nature accessible to everyone.

For Metro, achieving racial equity in greater Portland means that race would no longer be a reliable way to predict a person's life outcomes on measurements like education level, health or wealth, which are currently very closely related to race. In the process of creating racial equity, every group and community in greater Portland would see its well-being improve.

This means making sure people of color feel welcome and safe when they visit Metro destinations. It means creating job training and mentoring for people of color so the department's workforce looks like the people it serves, which isn't true now. It means Indigenous people, both those with close historical and cultural ties to the region and those with tribal roots in other parts of the country, will have more meaningful and easier access to cultural resources on properties that Metro protects and manages, all of which are on land ceded by regional tribes in the early years of colonization. It means contracting with more certified minority-owned, women-owned and emerging small businesses.

Metro's commitment to racial equity leads it to also work to better serve other communities that have been underserved or harmed by governments, including Metro. Thanks to the 2019 bond, Metro has been able to devote more resources to making its parks are accessible in a variety of ways to the disability community. That means making improvements to meet ADA requirements, but it also means going beyond ADA to provide options like trails that adaptive mountain bikers can both access and find challenging.



Promises made, promises kept

Metro's system of parks, trails, natural areas and historic cemeteries is the result of more than a quarter century of commitment, action and investment by the region.

It exists because of voter support for three bond measures and three levies. That support continued in the 2022-23 fiscal year when voters overwhelmingly ticked the "yes" box to renew the local-option levy that funds restoration work, park operations and community-led connections to nature.

The \$475 million 2019 parks and nature bond measure fully holds the legacy of continuing investments to protect land, improve parks and natural areas and support community projects.

Metro's bond work is overseen by the Metro Council and the Natural Areas and Capital Program Performance Oversight Committee. The committee provides critical community oversight and ensures Metro fulfills the promises made to voters.

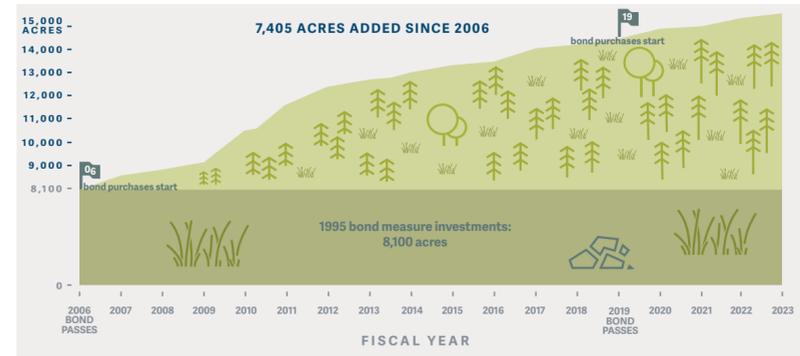
The Metro Council placed a high priority on creating a committee that reflected the diversity of greater Portland as well as formal expertise and expertise from lived experiences.

The work continues. Stay tuned for next year's annual report to track how your tax dollars are spent to improve parks and nature throughout the region.



Metro Council: On left, Metro Council President Lynn Peterson. Top row: Councilors Ashton Simpson and Christine Lewis. Middle row: Councilors Gerritt Rosenthal and Juan Carlos González. Bottom row: Councilors Mary Nolan and Duncan Hwang.

Land acquisition with 2006 and 2019 bond measure (CUMULATIVE)



Protecting and restoring land sits at the core of Metro's parks and nature mission. Thanks to voters, Metro has been able to protect important areas of remaining native prairies, forests, wetlands and other valuable habitat – home to rare plants and endangered or threatened fish and wildlife. Other properties fill key gaps in regional trails, providing connections for bike commuters, hikers and joggers. Some natural areas, such as Chehalem Ridge and Newell Creek Canyon, became nature parks that provide growing communities with access to nature.

The bond provides up to \$155 million for Metro to purchase natural areas from willing sellers and for large-scale restoration projects. This program continues the work of the 2006 bond measure, which acquired and protected more than 6,876 acres – significantly surpassing the original goal of about 4,000 acres. Over the past fiscal year, Metro has added 188 acres to its portfolio of natural areas.

Parks and Nature spending* Fiscal year 2022-23

	General fund	2018 parks and natural areas levy	2006 natural areas bond	2019 parks and nature bond	Total
Restoration/maintenance of parks and natural areas	\$906,939	\$6,391,840	\$98,583	\$2,619,792	\$10,017,154
Access to nature	\$0	\$463,696	\$0	\$0	\$463,696
Park improvements and operations	\$1,425,907	\$4,449,422	\$0	\$4,019,694	\$9,895,023
Cemeteries	\$768,447	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$768,447
Nature education and volunteer programs	\$94,232	\$788,751	\$0	\$0	\$882,983
Community investments	\$0	\$1,258,792	\$0	\$29,615	\$1,288,407
Land acquisition and associated costs/stabilization	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$7,088,265	\$7,088,265
Administration**	\$638,353	\$5,990,182	\$788,185	\$4,066,750	11,483,470
Total	\$3,833,878	\$19,342,683	\$886,768	\$17,824,116	\$41,887,445

* Unaudited
** Administration spending includes expenses for department administration and support services, such as the Office of the Metro Attorney, the Data Resource Center and Communications.

Parks and natural areas levy spending fiscal year 2022-23

Promised to voters



Actual levy spending

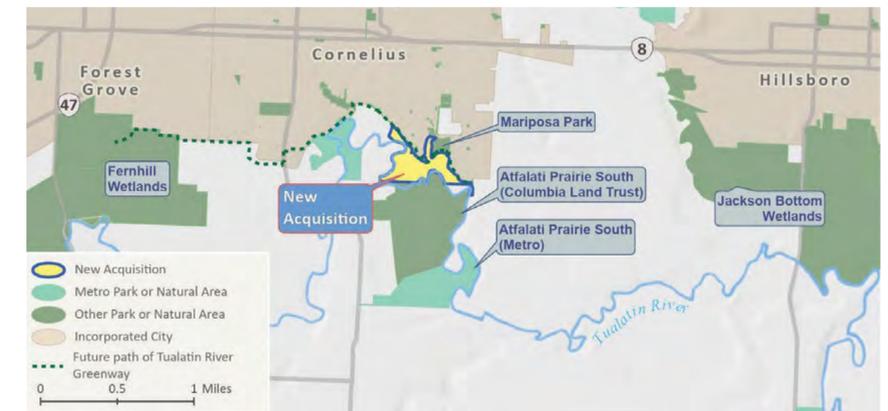
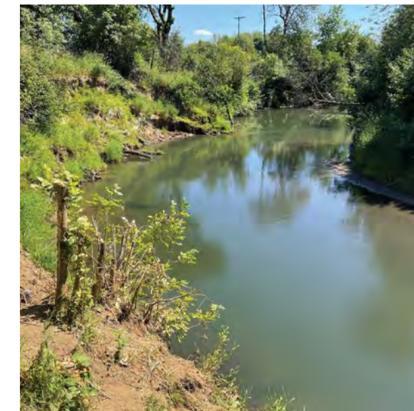
THROUGH JUNE 2023



- Improving public access to natural areas
- Regional park operations
- Nature in Neighborhoods grants
- Restoring natural areas for wildlife, fish and water quality
- Nature education and volunteers

Protecting waterways and habitat, one purchase at a time

By Hannah Erickson



This September, Metro announced the purchase of 53 acres of land in unincorporated Washington County, on the edge of Cornelius city limits. The purchase was made possible by the voter-approved 2019 parks and nature bond measure and is the latest step in years of work from multiple agencies and nonprofits to conserve habitat and protect water quality in this area.

"This acquisition leverages years of investment by multiple partners in habitat protection and restoration of the floodplain and adjacent uplands of the Tualatin River, from the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge to Clean Water Services' Fernhill Wetlands," said Metro conservation program director Dan Moeller. "It also expands the Atfalati Prairie, owned by Metro and the Columbia Land Trust, to approximately 345 acres."

This \$260,000 purchase helps meet Metro Parks and Nature's goal of providing people with access to nature close to home. Home to both riparian forest and wetlands, the property is located adjacent to the City of Cornelius's Mariposa Park and a 900-home housing development. The City of Cornelius

has secured a trail easement across the property and plans to construct a section of the Tualatin River Greenway Trail using an elevated path with a viewing platform overlooking the wetlands.

The purchase also furthers Metro Parks and Nature's goal of protecting clean water, as it includes approximately 4,650 linear feet of the Tualatin River, which has a broad and active floodplain. Floodplains are critical to mitigating against natural disasters and climate change. For example, they reduce the impact of floods on neighboring communities by providing safe, spongy ground that absorbs excess water and releases it slowly into streams and rivers. After careful study of the site, Metro will begin restoration efforts that will include re-establishing native vegetation to provide shade to cool water temperatures, stabilize riverbanks and reduce run-off pollution.

This was the 19th land acquisition purchased with funding from the 2019 parks and nature bond. Those acquisitions have protected a cumulative total of 583 acres in greater Portland.

In a nutshell

Purchase price: \$260,000

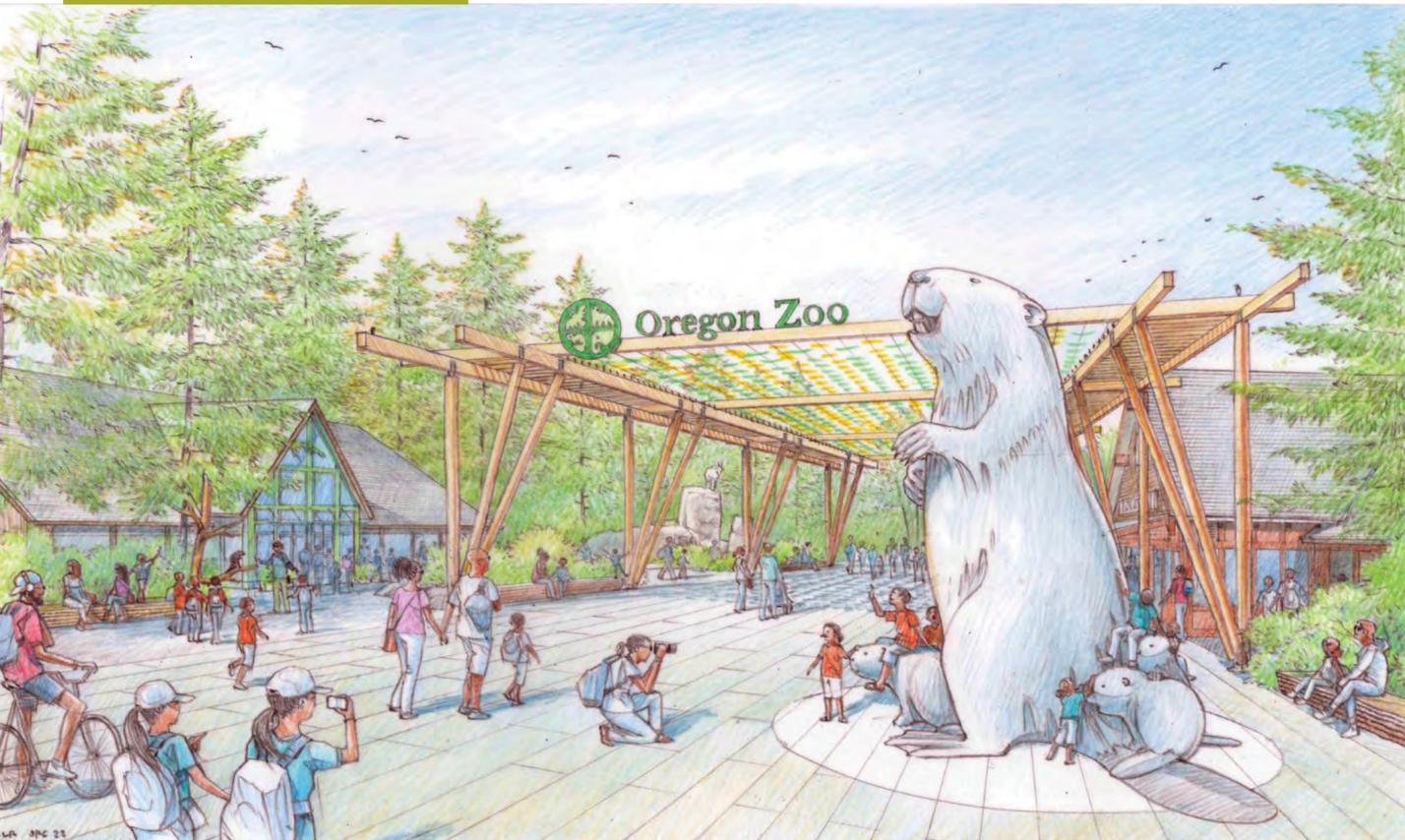
Neat features: This acquisition expands Metro's Atfalati Prairie South and Columbia Land Trust's Atfalati Prairie Natural Areas for a total protected area of approximately 345 acres. It is also the future site of a stretch of the planned Tualatin River Greenway.

Now protected:

- 53 acres of Tualatin River floodplain
- 4,650 feet of Tualatin River frontage

Habitats: Riparian forest with a mix of native tree and shrub species; wetlands; extensive Tualatin River floodplain.

Animals: Steelhead, salmon, trout, lamprey and other native fish. Mammals include black-tailed deer, coyote and bobcat. Birds include great blue herons and western and cackling Canada geese.



Oregon Zoo looks to the future

New plan envisions a campus to embody the zoo's conservation-minded mission

By Hova Najarian and Craig Beebe

For nearly 135 years, the Oregon Zoo has offered local residents and visitors from around world a chance to connect with wildlife. Along the way, it has evolved into a hub for the science of animal well-being and an internationally recognized conservation leader. It is helping to save all kinds of endangered species, from California condors to northwestern pond turtles.

It has also generated a tremendous amount of community pride and support.

In 2008, people across the region acted on behalf of animals and sustainability with an overwhelming vote to invest in the zoo.

“Our aim with this plan is to create a physical manifestation of our mission — a tangible representation of who we are.”

“The 2008 bond measure was transformative,” said Oregon Zoo director Heidi Rahn. “It provided for a dramatic overhaul to some of our most popular animal habitats, plus a state-of-the-art veterinary medical center, and much more. I was fortunate enough to oversee the zoo’s bond implementation from 2013 on, and seeing the difference now – all those blueprints brought to life – is incredible. We came together as a community to benefit the animals and the environment.”

All told, the 2008 bond reshaped nearly 40% of the zoo campus – an impact enjoyed by millions of visitors. But while zoo leaders celebrate what has been achieved through the community’s support, they’re also looking to the future. Habitats in other sections of the zoo still date to the late 1950s and may not be able to keep pace with changing standards. There also are accessibility challenges and aging infrastructure.

“We have a lot to be proud of,” Rahn said. “But at the same time, we know there is much more we can do – for our animals, for our guests and for our environment.”

All of that will be reflected in a new campus plan that will help shape the next era of animal care, guest accessibility and resource conservation at the zoo. Focusing on areas not improved through the 2008 bond, the plan proposes updating some of the zoo’s oldest animal areas, improving accessibility and amenities for guests of all ages and abilities, and ensuring the zoo does its part to both mitigate and respond to a changing climate.

“Our aim with this plan is to create a physical manifestation of our mission – a tangible representation of who we are,” Rahn said. “We want to create connections, spark interests and foster relationships that will benefit not just our region but the world.”

The plan’s priorities emerged through a nearly yearlong engagement process involving zoo guests, staff members, community groups, experts in animal care and conservation, and other stakeholders. The Metro Council

provided additional input during a September work session at the zoo, and unanimously approved a resolution to accept the draft plan concepts in late October.

“Something special about the Oregon Zoo is that we have made a public commitment to funding it for the members and residents of our region.”

Since implementing this new vision would require significant investment, Councilors also directed staff to look into possible financing opportunities and recognized an opportunity for the public to renew its commitment.

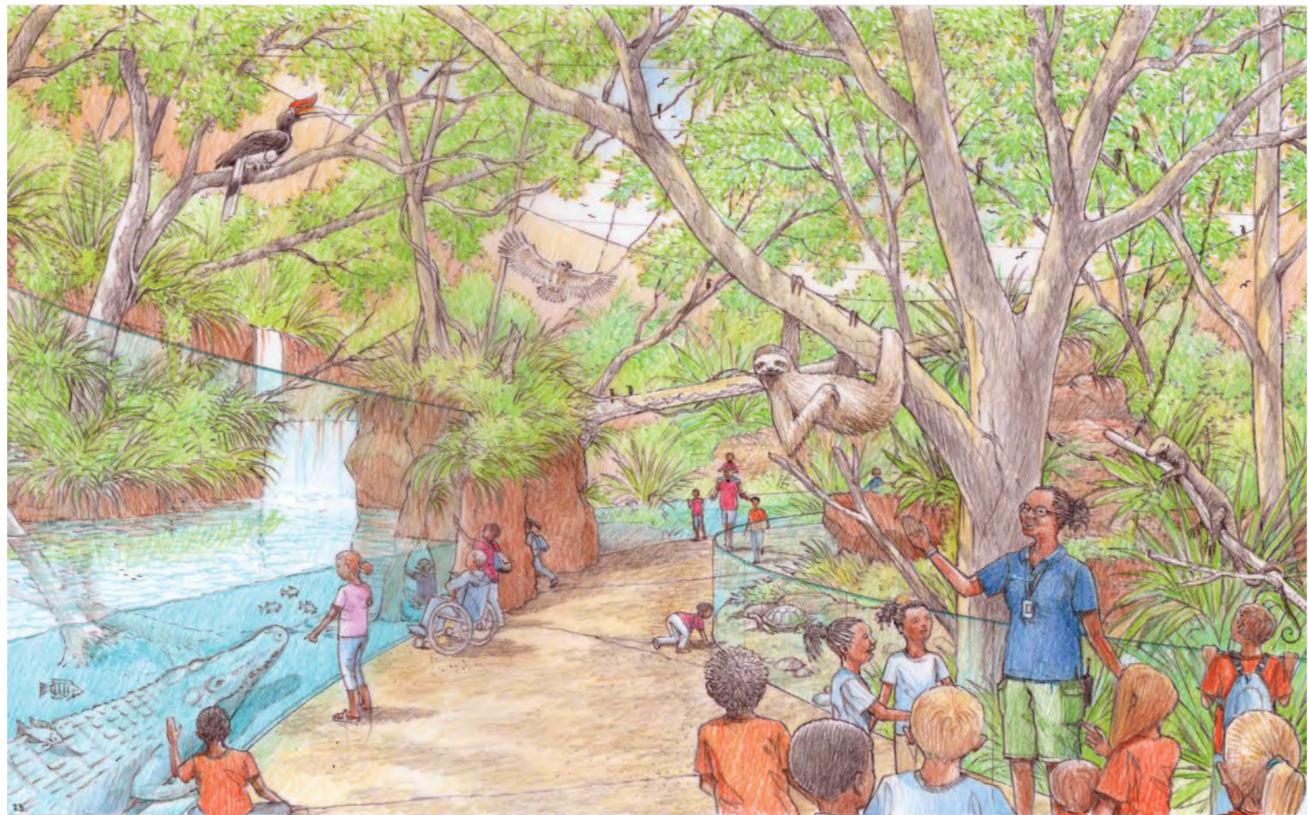
“When I’ve visited other zoos, you can’t walk five steps without stepping on a brick that’s sponsored or labeled or branded,” Councilor Christine Lewis said. “I think something special about the Oregon Zoo is that we have made a public commitment to funding it for the members and residents of our region, for visitors, without that kind of reliance. I’m really excited to continue on that path as we are looking to the future.”

With the Metro Council’s support, the zoo will continue refining the campus plan for adoption in spring 2024.

Left: An artist’s conception of what a new Oregon Zoo entry plaza might look like. The zoo aims to create a memorable sense of arrival, maintaining great views of the mountain goat habitat and the forest beyond while improving wayfinding and expanding guest amenities.

Above: A new Coastal Shores area would address aging infrastructure in one of the oldest parts of the zoo. Included in the plans: an open-air penguin habitat to replace the zoo’s outdated Penguinarium.

Below: New spaces such as an indoor “herpetarium” would highlight a diverse population of reptiles, amphibians, birds, bats and other small mammals.



Field guide

SMITH AND BYBEE WETLANDS



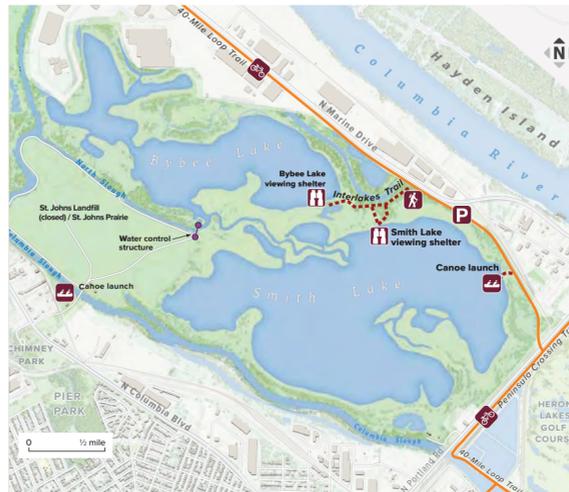
By James Davis, Punneh Abdolhosseini and Maiya Osife. Photography by Dylan Abel

Smith and Bybee Wetlands is a big surprise to many first-time visitors. Passing warehouses and railroad tracks in North Portland, you don't expect to find two seasonal lakes bursting with trees, plants and animals. But this 2,000-acre natural area provides some of greater Portland's best wildlife viewing.

Your first big choice: whether to explore by foot or boat. The Interlakes Trail passes along huge cottonwoods, alders, willows and grasslands, to several spots with great views of the natural area's two namesake lakes. This mixture of habitats provides homes for many kinds of wildlife, especially birds.

From mid-April through late June, see the lakes up-close by paddling a kayak or canoe. Start from the boat launch on Smith Lake. Paddling west through the channel that leads to Bybee Lake gives you a front-row view of many mammals. In late summer and fall, watch for hearty leaves of wapato on the mudflats. Wapato is an important first food to Indigenous people.

You'll find something exciting no matter when you visit. Discover basking turtles in the spring, creepy-crawly insects in the summer, migrating birds in the fall and



Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area

5300 N. MARINE DRIVE
PORTLAND, OR 97217

GETTING THERE

Take Interstate 5 north to exit 307, Delta Park/Marine Drive. Head west 2.2 miles on North Marine Drive and look for Smith and Bybee on your left. Or take TriMet bus line 11 to the 5300 block of North Marine Drive, which stops at the park entrance. The park is accessible via both the Marine Drive and the Peninsula Crossing bike trails.

KNOW WHEN YOU GO

Smith and Bybee is open sunrise to sunset. No bikes or dogs, please.

AMENITIES

A picnic shelter, bathrooms, bike rack, seasonal drinking fountain and site map can all be found in the parking area. The Interlakes Trail is paved, flat and wheelchair-accessible.

In the neighborhood While bikes aren't allowed on the Interlakes Trail, a paved bike path runs right by the park's entrance and bike racks are available. From Smith and Bybee, you can ride the path all the way out to Kelley Point Park. Or you can hop over to the nearby St. Johns neighborhood, full of restaurants, boutiques, two movie theaters, and the most photogenic bridge in all of Portland.

soaring raptors in the winter. You can nearly always spot muskrats, beavers, black-tailed deer, raccoons, cottontail rabbits, river otters, minks, long-tailed weasels or coyotes.

For more information:
oregonmetro.gov/smithandbybee

Season-by-season highlights

WINTER: From the Interlakes Trail, you can look right through the trees and see the lakes – an opportunity to spot mammals and big, perched birds. This is the best time to see bald eagles, red-tailed hawks and other raptors. By February, male Pacific chorus frogs call for mates in big gatherings at the edge of the water. If snow sticks, you might be lucky enough to see rabbit, deer or coyote tracks.

Be on the lookout!



OSPREY



WESTERN PAINTED TURTLE



WAPATO



MUSKRAT

SPRING: Explore by kayak or canoe for an up-close look at lush scenery and abundant wildlife. Many migrating birds pass through, and 35 species of songbirds nest here. Watch for western painted turtles basking in the sun on floating logs. Smith and Bybee has one of the biggest populations in Oregon. For reliable views, visit "Turtle Turnout," a wooden railing overlooking the slough on the right side of the Interlakes Trail. Look for Pacific chorus frog tadpoles in the water, and garter snakes sunbathing on logs or along the trail.

SUMMER: July and August are quiet as birds eat, hide, molt and grow to survive the coming seasons. Mammals cruise around near sunset looking for food, but they're the hardest animals to spot; they can sense people, especially if we're talking! One group of animals that's pretty obvious: insects and spiders. Spider webs laced with cottonwood seeds nearly cover the trees, creating a "haunted forest."

FALL: Migrating birds leave with their young, while thousands of ducks that nested in the Arctic arrive for the winter and feast on water plants loaded with seeds. Shorebirds, like killdeer and sandpipers, fill up on food while they head south. Look for black and orange caterpillars called "wooly bears," which drop to the ground and dig a place to hibernate until spring.

Tools for living

11 WAYS TO REDUCE WASTE
IN THE NEW YEAR



As the hustle of the holiday season comes to an end, the new year offers a chance to think about new beginnings. It is a fresh start for our habits and offers an opportunity to set a vision for the year ahead.

There are many actions you can do to conserve resources, minimize the impacts of products, and reduce waste in your daily life. Check out these New Year's resolutions and pick the one that works best for you.

- 1. Use reusable bags for groceries.** Opting for reusable bags saves resources, reduces plastic pollution and protects workers from having to remove plastic bags that get tangled in sorting machines. Using reusable bags twice a week for a year would keep 104 single-use bags out of the trash.
- 2. Bring your own reusable water bottle.** People in the U.S. purchase about 50 billion bottles of water per year, 75 percent of which go into the trash. Switching to refillable water bottles reduces one of the biggest contributors to plastic waste.
- 3. Ditch the paper towels.** Paper towels contribute 7.5 billion pounds of waste per year. Instead, you can swap to Swedish dishcloths, cotton kitchen towels or rags made from repurposed old clothing.
- 4. Stop before you buy.** There's a reason why the words "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" are usually listed in that order: Manufacturing new products takes more resources than reusing or recycling them. Buying fewer things, choosing things that will last longer and giving gifts of experiences all lessen the impacts of manufacturing.
- 5. Repair instead of discarding.** Repairing broken things can reduce waste and save money. Look for local experts or learn a new skill yourself. Check out local repair cafes to meet volunteers who give their time and repair expertise.



- 6. Cut down on food waste.** Food that ends up in the trash emits methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. Use a "first in, first out" method to go through groceries and look for meal-planning calculators to see how much food you need to make.
- 7. Make use of bulk food and refill stores.** Buying from the the bulk food aisle and zero waste stores helps people avoid using bulky containers and packaging – some stores carry free reusable jars you can fill and return.
- 8. Donate your unwanted things.** When you donate things you can't use anymore, you give someone else a chance to make use of them, and adding to the circular economy reduces the need to make new products!
- 9. Recycle your old electronics.** Many old electronics contain harmful materials like lead and mercury that we want to keep out of our environment. The Oregon E-Cycles program has over 200 collection locations throughout the state. Find a site by visiting EcycleOregon.org.
- 10. Use eco-friendly cleaning products.** People use an average of 40 pounds of cleaners each year, and many common cleaning products contain harmful ingredients. You can switch to less toxic store-bought products or make your own healthy cleaners at home.



11. Go pesticide-free in your garden. Garden chemicals can be harmful to humans, pets, wildlife and waterways. Switching your practices and products can make your garden as safe as it is beautiful. Got a question on how to start? Ask the metro area Master Gardener hotline at 503-821-1115.

Need some info to get started? Call Metro's waste prevention experts for more tips to achieve your New Year's waste-prevention resolution. Ask Metro at 503-234-3000

My New Year's Waste Reduction Resolution is...

Write your resolution here, cut it out, and post it on your fridge to remember



Ask Metro
503-234-3000
oregonmetro.gov/recycle

Color and discover!

Winter at Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area

Winter is an active time at Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area, with lots of water birds – some migratory birds who’ve come from farther north, as well as those who make the wetlands their year-round home. You might see ducks, geese, coots, cormorants, cranes and grebes. Raptors such as red-tailed hawks and bald eagles are common. Winter songbirds are easier to see because all the leaves are gone. By February, male Pacific chorus frogs call for mates in big gatherings at the edge of the water.

Want to keep up on all the seasonal changes at Metro parks and natural areas? Follow @OregonMetro on Instagram and Facebook or visit oregonmetro.gov/parks

